

Chapter IX

OBJECTIVES, PRINCIPLES, AND STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION

Planning is a rational process for formulating and meeting objectives. Consequently, the formulation of objectives is an essential task that must be undertaken before plans can be prepared. This chapter, accordingly, presents a set of land use and housing development objectives, along with supporting principles and standards. These objectives, principles and standards are intended to guide the preparation of the County development plan. The land use and housing development objectives set forth in this chapter were derived from such objectives contained in adopted regional plans which were considered by the Advisory Committee to be applicable to, and supportable by, Waukesha County and the local units of government within the County.

BASIC CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

The terms "objective," "principle," "standard," "design criteria," "plan," "policy," and "program" are subject to a range of interpretations. Therefore, they are defined below.

1. **Objective:** A goal or end toward the attainment of which plans and policies are directed.
2. **Principle:** A fundamental, primary, or generally accepted tenet used to support objectives and prepare standards and plans.
3. **Standard:** A criterion used as a basis of comparison to determine the adequacy of plan proposals to attain objectives.
4. **Design Criteria:** A body of information which can be applied to the development of a solution or solutions to a specific design problem or set of problems.
5. **Plan:** A design which seeks to achieve agreed-upon objectives.
6. **Policy:** A rule or course of action used to ensure plan implementation.

7. **Program:** A coordinated series of policies and actions to carry out a plan.

Although this chapter deals with only the first three of these terms, an understanding of the inter-relationship between the foregoing definitions and the basic concepts which they represent is essential to an understanding of the overall planning process.

LAND USE OBJECTIVES, PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS

The land use development objectives, principles, and standards presented in this chapter address: 1) allocation, 2) distribution, 3) natural resource base protection, 4) the relationship between land use and supporting public service and infrastructure systems, 5) residential development, 6) commercial and industrial development, 7) major outdoor recreation and open space sites, and 8) agricultural resource protection.

As previously noted, most of the land use development objectives, principles, and standards herein presented were incorporated without significant change from the set of planning objectives, principles, and standards incorporated in the adopted design year 2010 regional land use plan. The only substantive change to the previously adopted regional standards deals with the identification and preservation of agricultural lands as set forth in Objective No. 8. This change is described below.

Objective No. 8, Standard No. 1

Standard No. 1 under Objective No. 8 provides for the preservation of prime agricultural lands. The delineation of prime agricultural lands under the design year 2010 regional land use plan was based upon consideration of soil productivity, the size of individual farms, and the size and combined extent of the contiguous area being farmed. The standard utilized in identifying prime agricultural land in the 2010 regional land use plan specifically required that prime agricultural lands meet the following criteria: 1) the farm unit must be at least 35 acres in area, 2) at least 50 percent of the farm unit must be covered by soils which meet U. S. Soil Conservation

Service standards for national prime farmland¹ or farmland of Statewide importance², and 3) the farm unit must be located in a block of farmland at least 100 acres in size.

The standard utilized in the identification of prime agricultural lands in the regional land use plan, including the criterion indicating that the farm unit be located within a block of farmland at least 100 acres in size, and the criterion indicating that at least 50 percent of the farm unit must be covered by Class I, Class II, or Class III soils was, to a large extent, based upon criteria utilized in the identification of farmland preservation areas in county farmland preservation plans completed within the Region in the early 1980s, including the Waukesha County agricultural land preservation plan. The 100-acre minimum combined farmland area was chosen for such plans because it was consistent with the State's minimum acreage planning criterion for farmland preservation areas under Wisconsin's Farmland Preservation Program. This relatively small area would enable the largest number of farmers to qualify for tax credits under the State Farmland Preservation Program.

While the recognition in a land use plan of smaller blocks of farmland may enable a larger number of farmers to qualify for tax credits, the maintenance of long-term agricultural use within such smaller blocks in an urbanizing region such as Southeastern Wisconsin has proven to be very difficult. Among those reasons frequently cited to explain that difficulty are the following:

1. Relatively large blocks of farmland are necessary to support such agriculture-related busi-

nesses as distributors of farm machinery and farm supplies. Scattered, relatively smaller blocks of farmland do not provide the critical mass necessary for such agribusiness support enterprises. Consequently, farmers remaining in such smaller blocks must travel ever-increasing distances for support services.

2. In many cases, smaller blocks of farmland are merely remnants of formerly larger blocks which have been subject to intrusion by urban residential development. This intrusion has resulted in significant urban-rural conflicts, including problems associated with the objection by residents of urban-type land subdivision developments to odors associated with farming operations; to the use of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, and other agriculturally related chemicals; to the noise associated with the operation of farm machinery during the early and late hours of the day; and to the movement of large farm machinery on rural roads being used increasingly for urban commuting.
3. For most farming enterprises, the economies of scale require relatively large tracts of land, frequently involving many hundreds of acres. The breakup of large blocks of farmland by urban intrusion makes it more difficult for farmers to assemble such larger tracts either through ownership or rental arrangements. Tract assembly is thus complicated by scattered field locations, resulting in costly and inconvenient related travel distances and, therefore, in unproductive time and higher fuel consumption.
4. In agricultural communities on the fringe of urbanizing areas, there is often a declining interest among the next generation of farmers to continue farm operations. This is particularly true where alternative land uses are perceived to be available. This phenomenon is reinforced by the rigors of day-to-day farm life when compared with urban lifestyles.
5. Small blocks of farmland close to urban land tend to carry higher property-value assessments due to the real or speculative potential associated with the conversion to urban land uses. Not only is there competition between urban and rural uses, but the higher assessed values for potential urban uses

¹National prime farmland consists of agricultural lands covered by U. S. Soil Conservation Service-designated Class I and Class II soils. Class I soils are deep, well drained, and moderately well drained, nearly level soils with no serious limitation that restrict their use for cultivated crops. Class II soils are generally deep and well drained but may have some limitations that reduce the choice of plants that can be economically produced or require some conservation practices.

²Farmland of Statewide importance consists of agricultural lands covered by U. S. Soil Conservation Service-designated Class III soils. Class III soils have moderate limitations that restrict the choice of plants or require special conservation practices or both.

bring higher land values and associated higher property taxes, making farming less economically viable.

If the farmland block size criterion were to be increased, not all the foregoing problems would be resolved. However, the larger blocks envisioned would better be able to support agriculture-related businesses, would minimize urban-rural conflicts, and would be less susceptible to increases in property taxes as a result of reassessment due to the intrusion of higher value urban uses. In addition, such larger blocks of exclusive agricultural areas would provide greater assurance that such lands would continue in long-term agricultural use, thereby encouraging farmers to invest in agricultural improvements essential to good soil and water conservation.

The criterion specifying that prime agricultural lands include those areas where 50 percent or more of the farm unit is covered by soils meeting U. S. Soil Conservation Service standards for National prime farmland or farmland of Statewide importance was valid when the first county farmland preservation plans were prepared in the early 1980's. Inclusion of soils of Statewide importance, or Class III soils, in the standard was appropriate even though such soils may have had marginal crop production value because a high proportion of the farms within the County then were dairy operations. Dairy operations can be viable even though a relatively large portion of the farm unit may be covered by Class III soils because such soils are suitable for grazing, production of animal feed crops, and the use of cover crops related to the dairy operations. However, increased specialization of farm operations, and loss of smaller "family" farms and dairy farms in Waukesha County has now raised questions concerning continued utilization of farmland of Statewide importance, or Class III soils, as a criterion in the identification of prime agricultural lands within Waukesha County.

Local public officials, farmers, landowners, and soil scientists stated, at meetings held to review the preliminary County land use plan, that lands covered by Class III soils should not be considered as prime farmland. It was noted that such soils in Waukesha County, being sandy and erodible, or droughty, have a relatively low water holding capacity, rendering them unsuitable for the production of cash grain crops such as corn or soybeans. Because Class III soils are not as well-suited for intensive cash grain farming as Class I and Class II soils, and because of the significant loss of dairy

farm operations within Waukesha County over the past three decades, lands covered by Class III soils no longer have the same inherent value as an agricultural resource as when dairy farms were prevalent.

Given the aforementioned considerations pertaining to farmland block size and soil suitability, the standard used to identify prime agricultural lands in Waukesha County was revised to include those lands in agricultural use which meet the following criteria: 1) the farm unit must be at least 35 acres in area; 2) at least 50 percent of the farm unit must be covered by soils which meet U. S. Soil Conservation Service standards for National prime farmland; and 3) the farm unit must be located within a block of farmland at least five square miles in size.

The criterion for farmland block size proposed herein, five square miles, is not a new criterion. Indeed, the Commission utilized the five-square-mile-block criterion in the identification of prime agricultural land under the first-generation, design year 1990, regional land use plan adopted by the Commission in 1966. This criterion was established with direct input from, and utilizing the collective judgment of, University of Wisconsin-Extension agricultural agents working in the Region at that time.

As a practical matter, the application of the "block" standard would involve the delineation of gross areas of at least five square miles containing concentrations of farmland meeting the three criteria cited above. At least 75 percent of the gross area should be comprised of such farmland or of environmental corridor lands which occur within the blocks of such farmland.

The areas identified in this manner should consist of cohesive blocks of farmland; elongated strips of farmland should not be included. In general, the blocks should be delineated by existing concentrations of urban land and farmland which does not meet the three criteria. Blocks may also be delineated by wide environmental corridors such as the Vernon Marsh. The continuity of the block should not, however, be considered to be interrupted by relatively narrow environmental corridors occurring within the blocks of farmland.

It should be noted that application of the five-square-mile farmland block size criterion and removal of Class III soils from the prime farmland soils criterion will result in a different configuration of prime-agricultural lands in Waukesha County

from that set forth in the County agricultural land preservation plan.

The land use objectives along with their supporting principles and standards are presented in Table 117.

HOUSING OBJECTIVES, PRINCIPLES, AND STANDARDS

The housing objectives, principles, and standards for Waukesha County presented here were derived from the objectives, principles, and standards incorporated in the adopted regional housing plan for Southeastern Wisconsin. That plan was prepared under the guidance of a technical and citizen advisory committee consisting of local elected officials, government housing program administrators, architects, and builders from throughout Southeastern Wisconsin and was adopted by the Regional Planning Commission in 1975.³ The County housing objectives, principles, and standards set forth in Table 118 represent those objectives, principles, and standards of the regional housing plan which were considered by the Advisory Committee to be applicable to, and supportable by, Waukesha County and the local units of government within the County.

In adapting the regional housing objectives, principles, and standards for use in the preparation of the County development plan, an effort was made to ensure conformity with housing standards currently used by Federal, State, and local housing agencies. In particular, the recommended objectives, principles, and standards are intended to coincide with the housing standards utilized in the Waukesha County Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy, standards which are largely prescribed by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.⁴

OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS

In applying the land use and housing standards in the preparation of the County development plan, several overriding considerations must be recognized. First, it must be recognized that it is unlikely

any one plan proposal can meet all of the standards completely. Therefore, the extent to which each standard is met, exceeded, or violated must serve as a measure of the ability of the plan proposal to achieve the specific objectives which the given standard complements.

Second, it must be recognized that some objectives may be complementary. Thus, the achievement of one objective may support the achievement of other objectives. For example, the concentration of new urban residential development within planning units served by public sanitary sewers, water supply service, and other urban services and facilities, as called for in Standard No. 1 under land use Objective No. 2, is consistent with, and would support, the protection of the natural resources of the County, as called for under land use Objective No. 3.

Conversely, it must be recognized that some objectives may be conflicting, requiring reconciliation through compromise. For example, the preservation of agricultural and other open space lands as called for under land use Objective Nos. 7 and 8 must be reconciled with the required allocation of land to the various urban uses, as called for in Objective No. 1, in the plan design process.

Third, it must be recognized that the standards must be judiciously applied to areas or facilities which are already partially or fully developed, since strict application may require extensive renewal or reconstruction programs. In this respect, it should be particularly noted that the land use standards which are concerned with natural resource protection, use, or development, or with neighborhood and community development, relate primarily to those areas of the County where the resource base has not as yet been significantly deteriorated, depleted, or destroyed and where neighborhood and community development has not yet been significantly disrupted. In areas where such disruption, deterioration, depletion, or destruction has already occurred, application of the standards may make it necessary to inaugurate programs which would restore neighborhoods and the resource base to a higher level of quality or quantity.⁵

³See SEWRPC Planning Report No. 20, A Regional Housing Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin, 1975.

⁴Waukesha County, Waukesha County Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy, 1993.

⁵Such programs are specifically recommended for surface water resources in the comprehensive watershed plans prepared and adopted by the Commission and in the regional water quality management plan and for air resources in the regional air quality attainment and maintenance plan.